

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (previously presented): A video conference system, comprising:

a first conference room and a second conference room, the conference rooms electronically coupled together to permit transmission of images from each room to the other room for viewing, each conference room having:

a large format display system for projecting images;

and

a camera positioned with respect to the large format display system to capture an image of the conference room and a participant in the room, without substantially obscuring the participant's view of the large format display system, so as to provide the perception that the participant in the room is looking directly at a participant in the other conference room;

wherein the large format display system defines an aperture, the camera located behind the aperture;

wherein the aperture is located so as to coincide with a visually insignificant area of the image of the other conference room as displayed on the large format display system;

wherein the visually insignificant area corresponds to an image of an unobtrusive physical object located in the other conference room.

Claim 2 (original): The video conference system of claim 1, wherein the camera is substantially hidden from the view of the participant in the conference room.

Claim 3 (original): The video conference system of claim 1, wherein the camera is located substantially medial to the large format display system and at or above eye level of a participant in the conference room, the camera substantially hidden from the view of the participant in the conference room.

Claim 4 (canceled)

Claim 5 (previously presented): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the aperture is located at a height at or about eye level of the participants and at a horizontal position at or near horizontal middle of the large format display system.

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (canceled)

Claim 8 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein each conference room is electronically coupled to transmit sound to and to receive sound from the other conference room.

Claim 9 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein each conference room further comprises:

an audio capture system for capturing audio from the conference room, the audio capture system having a microphone; and

an audio amplification system for projecting audio in the conference room, the audio amplification system having a speaker.

Claim 10 (original): The video conference system of claim 9 wherein:

the audio capture system comprises a plurality of microphones distributed throughout the conference room;

the audio amplification system comprises a plurality of speakers distributed around the conference room so the audio seems to emit from an image of a participant on the large format display system, and wherein the audio capture system and the audio amplification system are capable of permitting simultaneous dialog between participants in the first conference room and the second conference room.

Claim 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (original): The video conference system of claim 10 wherein at least one microphone is located in or on a surface of a table located in the conference room.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the large format display system comprises a projection display device and a projection screen, the screen having a front and a back, the front of the screen facing the conference room, the projection display device located behind the screen, facing the back of the screen.

Claim 14 (original): The video conference system of claim 13 wherein the projection screen is substantially the front wall of the room.

Claim 15 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the large format display system displays an approximately life-size image of the other conference room.

Claim 16 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the camera is a high definition camera.

Claim 17 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the first and second conference rooms contain similar furnishings, the furnishings arranged and located within the room in a manner to provide the perception of participants sharing a same physical space.

Claim 18 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the first and second conference rooms contain similar wall color and surfaces to provide the perception of participants sharing a same physical space.

Claim 19 (original): The video conference system of claim 1 wherein the first and second conference rooms are lighted to provide the perception of participants sharing a same physical space and to optimize the clarity of an image captured.

Claim 20 (canceled)

Claim 21 (previously presented): The video conference system of claim 1, wherein at least one conference room further comprises a second camera for capturing with high fidelity resolution an image of an item located at a pre-determined location within the conference room.

Claim 22 (original): The video conference system of claim 21 wherein the second camera is a high definition camera.

Claim 23 (original): The video conference system of claim 22 wherein the second camera is located where it can focus on the pre-determined location within the conference room, the predetermined location being the place where the item requiring high fidelity resolution image capture may be placed.

Claim 24 (canceled)

Claim 25 (canceled)

Claim 26 (previously presented): The video conference system of claim 1, the aperture having an anti-reflective, transparent cover.

Claim 27 (original): The video conference system of claim 24 wherein the half mirror beam splitter is at least partially transparent, providing the participants in the conference room a substantially unobstructed view of the display system.

Claim 28 (original): The video conference system of claim 24 wherein the half mirror beam splitter is located at a height at or near the eye level of the participant in the conference room.

Claim 29 (previously presented): A method of video conferencing between a first conference room and a second conference room, comprising:

receiving in the first conference room an image of the second conference room;

projecting the image onto a first large format display system in the first conference room at or near life size;

capturing an image of the first conference room and a participant in the first conference room, without substantially obscuring the participant's view of the first large format display system, so as to provide the perception that the participant in the first conference room is looking directly at a participant in the second conference room; and

transmitting the captured image to the second conference room for viewing;

wherein the first large format display system defines an aperture, a camera for capturing the image of the first conference room being located behind the aperture, wherein the aperture is located so as to coincide with a visually insignificant area of the image of the second conference room as displayed on the first large format display system, and wherein the visually insignificant area corresponds to an image of an unobtrusive physical object located in the second conference room.

Claim 30 (canceled)

Claim 31 (currently amended): A method of video conferencing between a first conference room and a second conference room, comprising:

receiving in the first conference room an image of the second conference room;

projecting the image onto a first large format display system in the first conference room at or near life size;

capturing an image of the first conference room and a participant in the first conference room using a camera located at a position within the first conference room that is substantially medial to the first large format display system and at or about eye level of a participant, the camera substantially hidden from the view of the participant in the conference room; and

transmitting the captured image to the second conference room for viewing;

wherein at least one of the rooms contains:

a plurality of overhead indirect lighting fixtures which do not direct light towards the display system and create a shadow zone in front of the display system, thereby increasing image contrast of the display system;

a plurality of side indirect lighting fixtures;

a table; and

a light source underneath the table.

Claim 32 (original): The method of video conferencing of claim 29 further comprising projecting the captured image onto a second large format display system in the second conference room at or near life size.

Claim 33 (original): The method of video conferencing of claim 29 further comprising:

receiving in the first conference room sound from the second conference room;

projecting the received sound into the first conference room;

capturing sound in the first conference room; and

transmitting the captured sound to the second conference room for projection in the second conference room.

Claim 34 (original): The method of video conferencing of claim 29 further comprising:

capturing a high fidelity resolution image of an item at a pre-determined location within the second conference room;

transmitting the captured high fidelity resolution image to the first conference room;

receiving in the first conference room the captured high fidelity resolution image; and

projecting in the first conference room the captured high fidelity resolution image for viewing.

Claims 35-38 (canceled)

Claim 39 (previously presented): A method of making a video conference system between two rooms, the method comprising:

placing a large format display system in each room;

placing a first camera in each room in a position within the room that is substantially medial to the large format display system and at or about eye level of a participant in the room, the camera substantially hidden from the view of the participant in the room; and

electronically coupling the two rooms together to bidirectionally communicate audio and video information;

wherein each large format display system defines an aperture, the first camera in each room being located behind the aperture, wherein the aperture is located so as to coincide with a visually insignificant area of the image of the other room as displayed on the large format display system, and

wherein the usually insignificant area corresponds to an image of an unobtrusive physical object located in the other conference room.

Claim 40 (original): The method of claim 39, further comprising:

furnishing the rooms with substantially similar furnishings, the furnishings arranged in a substantially similar manner, including similar furniture, lights, wall color and wall surfaces.

Claim 41 (currently amended): A method of making a video conference system between two rooms, the method comprising:

placing a large format display system in each room, the large format display system having a projection screen disposed along or into a wall of the room;

placing a camera in a position within each room so that a participant in the room has a line of sight to a medial portion of the large format display system, the line of sight being within the field of view of the first camera in the room, the camera substantially hidden from the view of the participant in the room;

electronically coupling the two rooms together to bidirectionally communicate audio and video information; and

placing in each room:

a plurality of overhead indirect lighting fixtures[[:]]
which do not direct light towards the display system and create a shadow zone in front of the display system, thereby increasing image contrast of the display system.

~~a plurality of side indirect lighting fixtures;~~

~~a table; and~~

~~a light source underneath the table.~~

Claim 42 (original): The method of claim 41, further comprising:

furnishing the rooms with substantially similar furnishings, the furnishings arranged in a substantially similar manner, including similar furniture, lights, wall color and wall surfaces.

Claim 43 (canceled)

Claim 44 (previously presented): The video conference system of claim 1, wherein a surface of the physical object facing the camera has a dark coloration and the view transmitted from the other conference room shows a physical object of a dark coloration.

Claim 45 (withdrawn): A video conference system, comprising:

a first conference room and a second conference room, the conference rooms electronically coupled together to permit transmission of images from each conference room to the other conference room for viewing, each conference room having:

a large format display system for projecting images;

and

a camera positioned with respect to the large format display system to capture an image of the conference room and a participant in the conference room;

an audio capture system which captures audio from the conference room, the audio capture system having a microphone; and

an audio amplification system which projects audio in the conference room, the audio amplification system having a speaker;

wherein at least one of the conference rooms is configured to have a reverberation time, frequency response, and other acoustic characteristics that approximate the response of a room with about twice the physical volume of the at least one conference room.

Claim 46 (canceled):

Claim 47 (currently amended): The method of video conferencing of claim 31, further comprising providing a table in at least one of the rooms and a light source ~~wherein the light source~~ underneath the table which includes lighting along underside edges of the table.

Claim 48 (currently amended): The method of claim 41 further comprising placing in each room a table and a light source ~~wherein the light source~~ underneath the table which includes lighting along underside edges of the table.

Claim 49 (currently amended): A video conference system, comprising:

a first conference room and a second conference room, the conference rooms electronically coupled together to permit transmission of images from each room to the other room for viewing, each conference room having:

a large format display system for projecting images;

and

a camera positioned with respect to the large format display system to capture an image of the conference room and a participant in the room, without substantially obscuring the participant's view of the large format display system, so as to provide the perception that the participant in the room is looking directly at a participant in the other conference room,

further comprising in each conference room:

~~a plurality of panels arranged alongside the large format display system;~~

~~—— a plurality of panels arranged alongside a location of the participant in the conference room; and~~

~~—— a plurality of panels arranged along sides of the conference room and further from the large format display than is the location of the participant in the conference room;~~

~~—— wherein each panel defines at least one recess having a light source therein a plurality of overhead indirect lighting fixtures which do not direct light towards the display system and create a shadow zone in front of the display system, thereby increasing image contrast of the display system.~~